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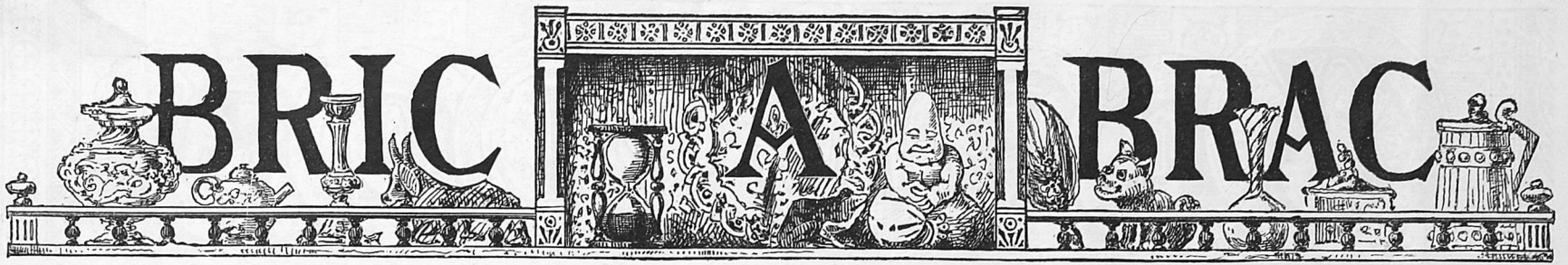
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#### SOME ROCK CRYSTAL VESSELS.



Nearly every important cabinet of miscellaneous objects of vertu, the beautiful limpid quartz known as "rock crystal" contributes some of the most precious works. The illustrations given

herewith are all of articles of this character, the originals having been in the great collection of the Duke of Hamilton, dispersed in London about a year ago. The first is of a tall oval cup, with bands of engraved ornaments, finely carved with an arabesque female figure in high relief. With its foot of silver gilt, which is handsomely chased and set with turquoises, it is eight and one-half inches high. It was formerly in the royal collection of France. At the Hamilton sale it was bought for £840 by W. Boore. The other object illustrated on this page, an oval cup, "very finely carved with marine monsters, waves, masks, and ornaments mounted with gold, enamelled with colors," was acquired at the price of £1207.10, by the London dealers, Marks & Durlacher Brothers. The double-handled circular vase is four and one half inches in diameter and nine inches high. It is carved with a monogram and scroll foliage in sharp relief. The mountings and cover are silver gilt. This piece was sold for £588 to J. H. Pollen. The barrel-shaped vase is very curious. It is formed of six pieces of rock crystal. There are three mouths to the object, which is engraved with views in medallions, birds and arabesques. It is mounted with gold, chased and enamelled in colors. It brought £955.10. The buyer was Wertheimer, a well-known London dealer.

#### THE BLENHEIM COLLECTION OF ENAMELS.

RATHER reversing the usual order of things, the dispersion of the famous Blenheim collection of Limoges enamels preceded by a few weeks the death of the Duke of Marlborough, the suddenness of which recently took London by surprise. The Sunderland Library had already been sold, and the breaking up of the choice cabinet of works of the great enamellers of the Renaissance was not quite unforeseen. Every one felt that that most un-aesthetic nobleman, the Marquis of Blandford, the heir of Blenheim, would have done the same thing without compunction, immediately on coming into possession.

The history of Limoges enamels, which for centuries had seemed lost, has in our own day received the attention that it deserved at the hands of M. Darcel, M. de Laborde, and many other French students, the results of whose inquiries have been embodied in more than one English book, notably in Mrs. Pattison's excellent work, "The Renaissance of Art in France." There is not, indeed, much information of a very definite kind to be gained about the early enamels, such as the splendid archaic crosses and the like which are one of the chief attractions of the Musée Cluny. We know that enamel-work in the middle ages went hand in hand with glass-painting; we hear of a great school

of enamellers at Cologne so early as the ninth century, showing the influence of Byzantium; and we can trace the art at Limoges itself back to the twelfth century. The sack of the city by the Black Prince in 1370 seems to have ruined the industry, which was long in reviving. But under Francis I., when internal

tion; or, like the dishes, salt-cellars, and sets of plates which are not uncommon, for combined decoration and use. So considerable was the demand that a long list of artists, on whose history much light has lately been thrown, worked at the art during the whole of the sixteenth century, and handed on the torch, though with a flickering flame, to others almost as industrious if not so great as themselves. Every one who has studied the treasures in the Salle d'Apollon with any attention will remember the names of the Penicaud family, of the Courtois or Courteys family, of Suzanne de Court, of Pierre Reymond, and above all of Leonard Limousin—Leonardus Lemovicus—"peintre du Roy." A century afterward we find various members of the Laudin family carrying on the work, and of course reflecting, in their tasteless subjects and in their coarse execution, the debased art of their day.

The Blenheim collection consisted of some eighty pieces, of varying merit and importance, but many of them noble examples of the best period and the greatest artists. There appears to have been but one early specimen, the small enamel numbered 21, which represents the "Adoration of the Magi," the style recalling the Flemish designs of Roger van der Weylen, or the work of the early Cologne masters. At the other end of the scale are a set of the Twelve Apostles, in the late Italian manner, and signed by one of the Laudins. But most of the pieces bear the precious signatures "S. C." (Suzanne de Court), "P. R." (Pierre Reymond), "J. C." (Jean Courtois), and others of the great age. The simplest way to divide Limoges enamels is into those done in grisaille and those done in colors; and of both these kinds there were many fine specimens. First among the former were the two large oval dishes (Nos. 61, 62), each twenty inches long by fifteen inches wide, of which one was figured in the catalogue of the Loan Exhibition at South Kensington in 1874. This is a glorious example of the work of Jean Courtois, representing the "Vision of the Apocalypse." It was bought by Mr. Whitehead for £1092. The companion was an effective but ill-drawn work of Pierre Reymond, "The Battle of Four Kings against Five," which brought £945. The smaller circular dish (60), also by Pierre Reymond; a beautiful tazza (55) painted after Raphael's design for the "Marriage of Cupid and Psyche;" a set of four figures of Virtues, signed "Ja. Penicaud, junior;" a set of ten plates, with emblems of the months; and, above all, a set of four superb hexagonal salt-cellars (48-51), were among the most notable pieces.

Of the examples in translucent, as distinguished from opaque, enamel, the most brilliant were two plates (46, 47) representing scenes from the story of Joseph; a square plaque of the crucifixion (58); a figure of a warrior (59); and a ewer (63). This latter, a remarkably fine piece twelve inches high, was bought by Mr. Whitehead for

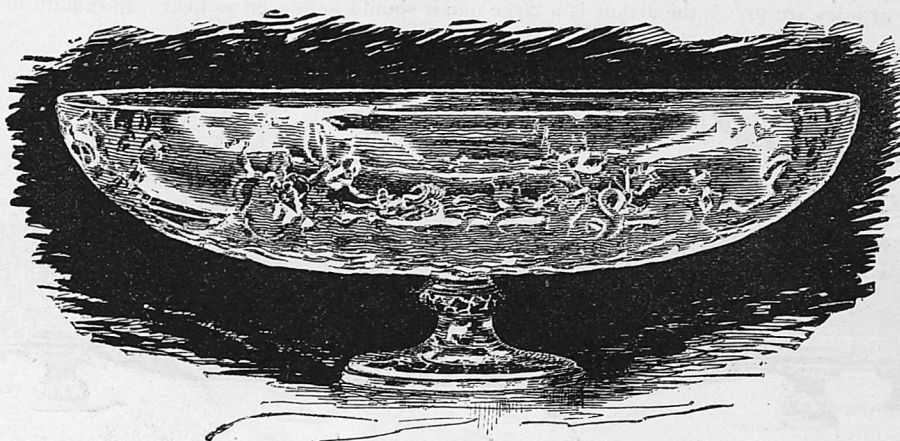
£945. It is almost a repetition of one belonging to Lord Warwick (No. 744 in the South Kensington Catalogue), and is a magnificent example of Suzanne de Court's handiwork. In giving the prices paid by Mr. Whitehead we have named the highest figures attained. Other specimens brought from about £150 to £350.

Quite a sensation was created when a little Sèvres table, which belonged to Marie Antoinette, was exhibited. But Mr. Christie announced that there was a reserve price of £6000 put upon it. No one seemed to



ROCK CRYSTAL CUP.  
IN THE LATE HAMILTON COLLECTION.

tendencies and external teaching combined to bring about that new birth of art which we call the Renaissance, the enamellers of Limoges began once more to take a place among the artists of their country, and very soon both reached a perfection unknown before and secured a popularity never enjoyed till then. In



ROCK CRYSTAL CUP.  
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former days they had worked for the churches; now, with the new taste for beauty and pleasure, with the spread of wealth and culture, with the improvements in the construction and furniture of houses, a demand arose for enamels to decorate the buffets and the walls of dwelling-rooms. Most of the fine pieces now in the great public and private collections—in the Louvre, the Musée Cluny, the South Kensington Museum, in the collections of Lord Warwick, Sir Richard Wallace, and others—were made for this sort of decora-



covet it at such a figure, and it was withdrawn. It is certainly a gem. It is almost square in shape, being thirteen inches by ten and a half inches and about thirty inches high. The upper part is like a box, about nine inches deep, formed of five Sèvres plaques, with turquoise "œil de perdrix" borders, and painted in the centres with groups of flowers. The woodwork is plain and very good, and the metal-mounting and ornament excellent, the lower part of the legs connected and strengthened by a stretcher. It is said that some one, years ago, offered £4000 for the table at private sale.

#### HAUNTS OF COLLECTORS.

ALL collectors gravitate to the shores of the Mediterranean, and yet even there, remarks *The Saturday Review*, it is best to choose one subject and cleave to it. There are large shops in Naples, and larger shops in Rome, where money may be judiciously spent. The lace collector finds Valletta better than Palermo. He who loves "gold grounds" hunts in the country of Cadore. The amateur of Greek coins finds them at Corfu. A street stall in Alexandria will furnish him with Egyptian antiquities enough for an ordinary museum. The laws of supply are somewhat arbitrary. The places where you expect most are often drawn blank. The much-vaunted bazaars of Cairo seldom furnish anything worthy of the collector's attention. There is nothing to be had at Genoa and very little at Venice. Athens abounds in forgeries, and at Constantinople the collector only sees the best things in private. At Florence there are shops and occasionally auctions; and on the whole, any one who understands art, and cares for it, will find there an excellent field for his operations. Paris is of course better, but in Florence there is more chance of good bargains. To any one who knew it twenty years ago or more it seemed as if the quantity of precious objects annually carried away by the northern barbarians must soon exhaust the stock and cause the closing of the shops. Yet they are twice or thrice as numerous as they were in 1860, and their contents would be interesting if only regarded as a gauge of the changes of fashion in art-work and the curious vagaries of collectors. Majolica, Venetian glass, wrought iron, steel incrustated with silver in delicate relief, embossed leather formed into such objects as powder-horns and even into pictures, repoussé silver, mediæval medals, ivories, old engravings, old wood-cuts, enamels, parcel-gilt wood carvings, tapestries, fine lace from church vestments—such are a few of the principal objects sought after, and so rapidly have prices increased that previously unheard-of collections are brought to light year after year, and no bounds seem to be set to the supply.

The days, it is true, are past when a majolica plate or a reliquary of old Venetian glass could be bought for two or three hundred francs. When such plates do turn up now they fetch hundreds of pounds, and as for old Venetian glass, it has literally disappeared. The last craze is for rich brocades, small pieces of which, quite useless for any purpose except to make a banner-screen, sometimes sell for several English pounds. These things are very effective in the decoration of the shops, as are also imitation majolica and forged bronzes, to say nothing of the mock jewelry of the last century, much of which now comes into the market and attracts the ordinary tourist. These articles help to keep the curiosity shops open; but the finer works that still remain in the country are seldom

seen among them, except perhaps with a few large dealers, who, possessing sufficient capital, can afford to wait for the wealthy collector. The good things come chiefly from remote palaces in Umbria, and are the private property of old families who are forced to sell them by reason of the compulsory division of property on the deaths of the heads of houses, or are tempted by hearing of the great increase in prices. Among such things was lately to be seen, for instance, a plaque or tile of Gubbio ware, the indubitable work of Maestro Giorgio, painted with a Madonna enthron-

worked into the pattern—the gift, no doubt, of some imperial benefactor. There was also plenty of rose and Venetian point, and the price is said to have been but two-and-twenty thousand francs.

#### ANTIQUE IVORY CARVINGS.

THE city of Volterra, in Italy, from time immemorial has owned several very remarkable ivories, some dating back to the fifth and sixth centuries, and others of the mediæval period. Lately, desiring to raise means for the improvement of their celebrated Museum of Etruscan Antiquities, the council decided to sell them, and had contracted with a French dealer for this purpose, when the Italian Government intervened and refused to authorize any private sale, but consented that they should be sold at public auction, after being duly advertised. It is to be regretted that the government itself felt unable to take them over for the National Museum at Florence, as the principal pieces are not only of great beauty, but of historical interest, and in a capital state of preservation. The expert, M. Tito Gagliardi, the well-known Florentine dealer sent by the government to appraise them, valued them at the moderate sum of 45,000 francs, but other experts assessed them at 65,000 francs. They were lately sold by auction in Florence for a total of 78,709 francs.

The pieces were fourteen in number, of which nine were comparatively unimportant, although interesting, consisting of small marriage-coffers of the fourteenth century, flasks and plaques of the same date, which fetched in all 1954 francs, much less than their real value, while the remaining five pieces brought 76,755 francs. The first piece was an oblong, narrow box, about sixteen inches in length, formed of plaques of sculptured ivory, representing classical subjects, warriors and chariots, with borders of beautiful decorative details, although, as a whole, representing the debased Roman art of the fifth and sixth centuries, to which period this box was said to belong. It was knocked down, after sharp competition, for 19,950 francs. The second article was a coffer of like form, with a flat top, composed, in a similar manner, of carved ivory slabs, with beautiful ornaments on a golden background, filled with warriors, animals, and

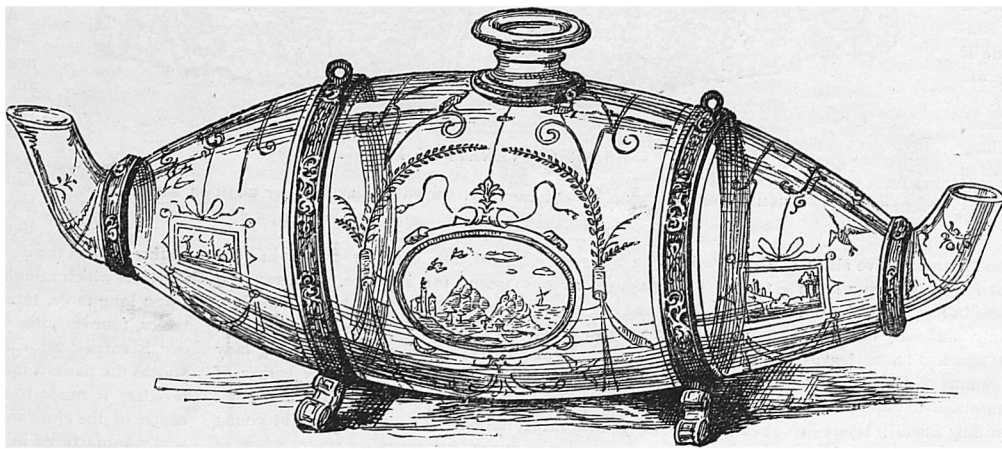
fantastic inventions of, perhaps, a little later Roman period, but well preserved. This sold for 5950 francs. A small plaque, six inches long by about three wide, which, perhaps, was the half of a very early diptych of the time of Charlemagne, in the rude Lombard style, and was divided into three parts or pictures taken from the life of David, a remarkably fine representative ivory of the period, sold for 4830 francs. An ivory cross with its sculptured staff, painted and gilded, which belonged to the Abbey of St. Juste Alle Baize, a fine specimen of Italian art of the second half of the thirteenth century, sold for 19,740 francs.

This was sharply contested. But the greatest prize for the amateurs in ivory was the cross, with its magnificent staff, which belonged to Benci Aldobrandini, Bishop of Gubbio in 1331. It is preserved in a stamped leather case of the period, bearing the arms of the bishop interlaced with foliage and grotesque animals in perfect condition. The style of carving is rich Gothic, against a blue ground, with gilded ornamentation and arabesques in colors and inscriptions, the principal subject being the Adoration of the Magi. This splendid relic was sold for 26,250 francs.



ROCK CRYSTAL VASE WITH COVER AND HANDLES.  
IN THE LATE HAMILTON COLLECTION.

ed, and saints on either side, delicately drawn, gorgeous in color, full of gold lustre and the precious and inimitable ruby red. It was certainly a beautiful object, and a few years ago might have been valued at as much as thirty or forty napoleons. The modern price is £800. This is not to be seen in a shop, nor is a plate by the same master, for which a thousand francs is asked. Attached to the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova is a museum which the directors of the charity are said to contemplate selling. It comprises fine works of art of various classes. Among the pict-



BARREL-SHAPED ROCK CRYSTAL VASE.  
IN THE LATE HAMILTON COLLECTION.

ures is one which, if it is not purchased by the Italian Government, will excite keen competition. It is an immense altar triptych by Van der Goes. The centre is a Nativity as large as life. It is said to rival the famous Van Eyck at Ghent, and has its wings, whereas those of the Van Eyck are at Berlin, whither it is probable the Van der Goes will follow the Hamilton manuscripts unless the English Government steps in. The laces of the hospital have already gone to Paris. They comprised vestments of priests and an altar cloth of exceptional beauty, with crowned eagles